

What is the Merger Process?

Merger is a process to streamline the project development and permitting processes, agreed to by the USACE, NCDENR (DWQ, DCM), FHWA and NCDOT and supported by other stakeholder agencies and local units of government. To this effect, the Merger process provides a forum for appropriate agency representatives to discuss and reach consensus on ways to facilitate meeting the regulatory requirements of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act during the NEPA/SEPA decision-making phase of transportation projects.

The Merger Process allows agency representatives to work more efficiently (quicker and comprehensive evaluation and resolution of issues) by providing a common forum for them to discuss and find ways to comply with key elements of their agency's mission. The Merger Process helps to document how competing agency mandates are balanced during a shared decision-making process, which results in agency representatives reaching a "compromise based decision" to the regulatory and individual agency mandates.

What is a Successful Merger Project?

A successful Merger Project uses a collaborative decision-making process to avoid/minimize impacts to the human and natural environment while meeting the safety and mobility of the travelling public.

Who Is Involved?

Each project team will consist of appropriate primary signatory agencies and partnering signatory agencies. The composition of agencies on each project team will vary depending on the specific project's location and scope.

FHWA, USACE, NCDOT and NCDENR are the primary signatories for the Merger Process agreement and are also known as the process owners or sponsors. The partnering agencies are as follows: U. S. Environmental Protection Agency; U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service; National Marine Fisheries Service; N. C. Wildlife Resources Commission; N. C. Department of Cultural Resources; U. S. Coast Guard, U. S. Forest Service; Tennessee Valley Authority; National Park Service; Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO's); Rural Planning Organizations (RPO's); and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Nation. Some of the partnering agencies will participate only when the project is in their respective geographic area of responsibility or statutory authority.